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[**RD** = The narrator, Reva Demicell]

LD= The interviewer, Larry Day]

LD: What is your full name?

RD: Reva Wall Demicell.

LD: And you were born...?

RD: November 21, 1915.

LD: How long have you been here in the Coloma area?

RD: About 40 years, I came here in January of 1961.

LD: What was your connection from that time into Coloma?

RD: We came out and bought the property across the river from Guy and Katy Chadwick of course there's seven and a half acres near the bridge and we cleaned up all the debris and built a mobile home park and campground and we had that from 1961 to 1971.

LD: And that's when you sold it to someone else. Faye Knight. If you were there in '61, then you were familiar with all of the buildings and some of the people that lived on that side of the river.

RD: Right.

LD: Could you tell us about that and the Gallaghers...

RD: Uh, the people that we bought from the property from, Guy and Katy Chadwick had a house on the upper property which we rented back to them and they stayed there. The

house next to them I think it was called the Nicholeyson house. Originally it belonged to Roger Kupps and I don't know who all. It was a big two-story house, real, real old.

LD: Is it still there?

RD: No, later people who owned property bought that property also and tore the house down. The materials from that property were used to build the building across from Sutter's Fort in the capitol.

LD: Do you mean the museum there?

RD: Is that what it is?

LD: There's one there.

RD: Yeah, OK and so it makes it look old, but it really isn't. I think it was built about 1972 or something like that. Anyway, it was used as a rental when we were there. And then across the road from that was Mel Gallagher's house. He and his mother lived there, Louise. They had milk cows, a dairy barn, and this house. And then I understand that at one time their house had been a stage stop. Lower, towards the river was a cottage and Mrs. Veerkamp, I mean Mrs. Gallagher's, brother William Veerkamp lived in it. Let me think, down by the river... Oh, on the corner, of Fain Road and Mt. Murphy Road there was a real old house that Mel told me that was where his mother and Dad lived when they first got married and Mel was born there in that house. And at this time it was rented to a man named Sam Somers who was an old time pioneer. Mel later tore that house down. That's the main one right around...

LD: Do you remember when all that property was given to the state, and it was all bulldozed over?

RD: Yeah, and that was a shame, because both of those houses were real, real old. And Matt even told me it was a shame that they at least tore down the Gallagher house.

LD: What did the Gallagher house look like? Do you have a picture?

RD: Yeah, we do have a picture of it. It was about a story, it was two stories really. I remember, it had a porch that was narrow and the bedrooms up, and you went into a big living room and then off to the left was a kitchen and to the right was a porch and laundry facilities and that sort of thing. And then back door where you went out. And then the upper floor was bedrooms.

LD: So, Mrs. Gallagher was a Veerkamp?

RD: Yeah, Louise Veerkamp.

LD: One of the original Veerkamps that came through here for...

RD: Her father was, yeah.

LD: And then William Veerkamp, what happened to him, do you know?

RD: Yeah, he died, he died while we still lived there and he's buried in our cemetery, although Louise isn't.

LD: Sam Somers and he was an old pioneer, do you know anything about him?

RD: Not too much, I've seen some mention of him in some of our notes. I know he had a daughter named Joan that was married to Loren Winje and she was killed in a car accident and then he later remarried.

LD: Not around here any more...

RD: Unh, unh. Sam died while we still lived here, Joan died also.

LD: Are they in our cemetery?

RD: No, neither.

LD: You talked to me since, also and told me about your connection to the Grange..., can you tell us about them.

RD: Yeah, Mel's father donated the property.

LD: Mel is...

RD: Mel Gallagher's father... donated the property to build the Grange Hall and it was called the Community Hall and if we were going to be in there, you paid a \$10 membership fee for a year. And we had a board of directors at one time my husband was president and I was on the board. And I think Huey Bacci and Martini, Andrew Martini, Virginina Papini and one of the older Winjes was on the board; Jack Edwards was on the board. Jack and Eileen Edwards owned what is now the Winje Center and they also owned the gun shop, but it was bought out by the state. They sold gold and little odds and ends of things in there. We didn't earn much money from the community hall. We had meetings in there called the Coloma/Lotus Booster's Club. We did a lot of good. The Grange rented space for their meetings in there. Sometimes there was a church that had meetings in there and that sort of thing, so one year the fire department came along and they demanded that we do a lot of work on the Grange Hall, and we didn't have the money. So, I suggested that we sell it to the Grange because they wanted it, so we sold it to them for \$1.

LD: So there was a Grange at a different location before this time?

RD: They had their meetings in there.

LD: There was a Grange before then?

RD: No,

LD: So, then the Grange has it now, but it uses it for different things.

RD: It belongs to the Grange now. But, they had the money to do all these things that the fire department wanted done and we didn't have; they took it over.

LD: You told me about different people had houses that the Grange...

RD: Yeah, the Mormon cabin and then building where that log is that came out of the river from the original [mill], they were not there, that's been built since this time. The saw mill was not there at that time when we first came. But, on past the parking lot here, this first parking lot, there was a big two story house that was all boarded up and a lot of real big azelias around it, I remember that. The State decided it was a hazard, so they had it torn down. I think that was where the Burgesses lived, but I'm not sure. On down past that we come to Pleasant Beach and that was owned by Emma and Cecelia Papini and now the Dorcas [?] Papini and at first when I first came here, it was just Emma and her mother lived there and then Cecelia was a school...in fact, all the Papini girls were school teachers. Emma had been retired for some time. So, Cecelia retired and came and lived with Emma. And then the mother passed away and both Emma and Cecelia passed away within a month of each other, they all had cancer. Those two had cancer. Then Virginia Fancher who was the other daughter, took it over, and I think her children ran the campground during the summer. Later, her husband was a..., Virginia's husband, was a deputy sherrif in Sacramento. When he retired, they moved out here and they still live here. Across from Pleasant Beach, that property did belong to the Papini's and they sold it to John Hassler who built the Sierra Nevada House. I think he built that about 1963, somewhere along in there, it was after we came here. And he had the ice cream parlor and the lunch counter in there and then his wife Penny had an antique store and of course now, it's a dining room. And later they bought the property where the school house was,

and built a house down below it and she used that for her antique store. She and Marcia and Elizabeth, I can't remember their last name. Anyway that was an antique store. And then he turned that into a dining room at that time because they seemed to get a lot of business. And coming back this way on that side of the road, there was the first building, was a small building and it was a real estate office. In fact, that's the real estate person that we worked with when we bought the Gallagher property, I mean the Chadwick property. The lady that was the real estate agent is now buried in the Lotus Cemetery. Her name was Aggie Miller. And then coming on back this way, there was a house -- I think the Brink's lived there, I'm not real sure. But there was quite a nice one story house, but it was rather large. Then this way toward the back a long narrow building. And there was some people had that and they sold knick-knacks, and gold, and old coins and what have you and then next to it was a big two-story house. In front of the two-story house was a drive-in restaurant. And Lil and her husband Joe, and I can't remember their last names, they called her Coloma Lil. they had this restaurant and she made donuts that were quite large but real thin and she called them Coloma Lil's Horse Collars and everybody in the country went out there for Coloma Lil's Horse Collars cause they were good. I think they had the big house behind the restaurant. I remember they had an Indian statue, no, a totem pole, out in front of it. Then next to them was the property that belonged to the Monroes. And the Monroe house sat way back up from the road. And then the garage that's still there. The house that has since been torn down. And coming this way, just before you get to the Chinese stores was a real old building and they had the gold panning exhibit, not gold panning, but all the equipment, you know, for gold, getting gold. They had that in there and they had this old safe that's out here in front, now they

had it on the porch, I remember that. Later that building was torn down. And then, of course, there was the and then museum and then the plum grapes and then next to the plum grapes was that old building that is now the quilter's was the post office when I first came here and uh, Mr. and Mrs. Rosenberger were the post master and post mistress there and they lived in the Weller house. And then going on up the street there where the Nature Center is, belonged to Jack and Eileen Edwards and they lived in that house and they dealt in antiques also. Next to them the Papini house, there was Jim and Margeret Bridgem who, I left out the Hitching Rack, who ran the Hitching Rack which was before the Nature Center. In fact, across from the Post Office. And that was a bar, grocery store, service station, restaurant sort of thing and they were both excellent cooks...kind of a community meeting kind of place more or less

LD: And that was across from where the present post office is?

RD: Across from where the post office is now. And in front of it, the beer garden , Jim Bridgem had that built and they used to have barbecues down there. I remember one time they had pizza and everyone in the country was going on about the pizza they had down there. It was a place to serve food and the community kind of gathered there. In the Papini house, Margeret and Jim lived in that and there was another building behind that portion that's left there. In fact there was more to that Papinin house than there is now. I was in there once to visit Margeret and it had ...we went in the back door. It had a laundry, the laundry tubs on the back porch and a bathroom and a kitchen back there, it's no longer there. And behind that was another building where Jim lived and I don't know what it amounted to, but he lived back there.

LD: Do you know who tore that part of the house down?

RD: They tore it down because they said it was not original. That's all I know. Then past the driveway that goes to the Odd Fellow's Hall, on the corner there, there was some people had a big garden in there. They had a house next to it. Older couple, and I can't remember their names.

LD: So, since the state has bought this out in the early '70's, they've made a lot of changes that are not necessarily for the good.

RD: Right, and then on past that, I don't remember much about that Sutter's Mill Place, Sutter Store, I don't remember much about in between there. But then there was what they called the Markham house. There was a Mr. Kitt who lived there, and his daughter and granddaughter. Dorothy and I've forgotten the little girl's name.

LD: Was the French Garden still being used at that time?

RD: French Gardens were down by the river. No, it was not being used. It hadn't been used for some time. I think that property belonged to the Ferreras when I came here. Down that road, on the left of the road, there was a bunch of little old cabins and they rented those out and they belonged to the Ferraras. And then up past them, there was a house, when I first came here, the people that lived there were missionaries who used to have bible study group at the Vineyard house. This lady was the head of that. In later years, George Burn's daughter, Sandy and her husband, bought that property and built what is now called American River Resort.

LD: Was the Odd Fellows house still being used for church services?

RD: Odd Fellow? Oh no, they already had these churches, the Catholic church was boarded up and was for years, I guess. But the Emmanuel Church was being used by a non-denominational group who later built a church down river. And it's still there,

they're still having...and once they gave up the church, then it was boarded up for a while and then, they started having weddings. In fact, I got married in that church.

LD: Oh, you did.

RD: Yes.

LD: Oh, you got married in that church.

RD: Oh yeah. In 1971. I asked John Dixon who was the park superintendent at the time if I could use it for my wedding, and he said "Reva, it's really dirty, it's really bad." And I said. "I've got a bunch of teenage kids who are willing to clean it up." And he said, "Well, have at it." So I went in there.

LD: Now, John Dixon was the superintendent of the park.

RD: Yes,

LD: He's no longer with us

RD: He's buried in our cemetery.

LD: Buried in the cemetery. Now, you talked about the Rosenbergers.

RD: Rosenbergers were the postmistress and ...

LD: Do you know anything about them?

RD: Well, they're buried over in the Lotus cemetery.

LD: Do we have any kind of history here on them?

RD: They had a bunch of relatives around here, but I'm not, I can't tell you about them right now. I could guess, but I can't remember exactly. Oh, she was a Fontaine, I think and then Fontaine's were Lotus people and there's quite a few of them buried in the Lotus Cemetery. She has a neice who lives in Georgetown, Jean Smith but I don't know where in Georgetown.

LD: OK, now how long have you been volunteering here?

RD: Umm, I started helping with the Christmas decorations in 1986. And I can't remember, it seems to me like I had taken the docent training earlier in that year. It's hard for me to remember back all those things, but I remember there were two other ladies and I who had taken docent training together and Tad, what's Tad's last name, he was in charge of the museum at the time, he was the ranger in charge of the museum, as well as I know him. Well, anyway, he had us to inventory all the items in all the cases in the museum. And it was really funny cause a lot of things, we didn't know what they were, and we had to put the number down, and the case and all that sort of thing. And after that I asked him if there was something else we could do and well, he said, he had a bunch of books in the back room he'd like to have inventoried, but he didn't have time to show us about them right then and so he didn't call us and didn't call us and I came back over and I'd ask him. "You ready for us to do those books?" "No, I haven't got time" and these other two ladies just dropped out because nobody called them, or asked them to do anything. But then, I asked Anne Sedaquist, who I had known, her husband had been a ranger when I first came here, Earl. I asked her if she needed help with weddings and she said, she sure did, so I started helping her with the weddings. And then later in the paper, in that newsletter that they put out, I saw that Connie Price who was the secretary in the museum office, I mean the office, needed help in there and I started helping her two days a week. And from that it just went on...

LD: Now, let's talk about the cemetery group.

RD: Oh yes, I was working in the office one day when, Frank Doherty who was the state geneologist or something, anyway, he was a state man and he was talking to Matt

[Sugarman] and I went in and to get Matt something and I heard him say, "we need to get a cemetery committee together because that cemetery's in really bad shape." And I said, "Oh, I'd like to be part of that." So then Lily Huskins said she could help with it. So, she and I started out. But she was doing things, but she did get in touch with Betty Marvell who got in touch with Suzy Mickus and they came out to our meetings and Frank Doherty came to our meetings and we got Roy Ripolla, the monument man, to our meetings. And we decided that... Frank Doherty said, "The first thing we need to do, is take pictures of everything up there." So I got my son to go up there, it was Cold, he took about half of them and then my granddaughter from Sacramento, I had her come out and she took the rest of the pictures of the cemetery as it was then, which we have in the cases here. Frank said that was good because then we could show what it was like when we started and after we finished. Then Betty Marvell, Suzy Mickus, went up there and we measured all the plots in the cemetery and described any little shrubs or anything, rocks or anything else that was there, whether they had coping around them and what kind of coping. And this one lady, she was quite an artist, she was important to us, and she drew pictures of the tombstones and what they said on them and after we got through plotting the whole cemetery, Suzy decided they needed to be cleaned because some of them, quite a few of them, you couldn't even read them names on them, you could take your finger and go around them. So we started cleaning them and Mr. Ripolla told us to use Tide soap and brushes and Matt said, "Oh, you can't use Tide soap on the marble." So we got a hold of somebody with the state and they had us order some special non-acid, or acid-free soap to clean the marbles with. But, other than that..., we had to haul water up there because there was no water up there. It took us about a year and right at the last, I think,

Lyn started helping and she did one or two, one of my daughters cleaned one, there's 154 tombs though. Mostly Suzy and I cleaned them all. Then we over to the Catholic church and the cemetery and cleaned those. And we had Mr. Ripolla to repair 36 tombstones, some of them were just loose, some of them were broken, they had to be put back together. Some of them were turned over, you know, that sort of thing. Anyway he repaired them, 36 of them, and five of them in St. John's cemetery. And then we got the Growlersburg crew came and cleaned up the weeds and made us some paths in there and that sort of thing. We did a lot of research. We had so many of them, we didn't know who they were. We had only the cards from the museum to tell us, sometimes they would tell, say, that they were in Row so and so, plot so and so, and so forth, and we were able to know who was in those from those cards and some of them we went to the State library and the University library...

LD: What University?

RD: The one in Sacramento. And we went to Auburn to their library and to their government buildings there. We went to the Placerville museum, got lots of information from the Placerville museum. We went to the recorder's office and got a lot of information there. So, we were travelling all over and working and working and Betty Marvell gave us a lot of information because she traced family's geneologies and she had a lot of information. That was about it.

LD: From your research on the cemetery and that progressed to what we now have here for geneology?

RD: That's right. We also researched the Uniontown or Lotus Cemetery because so many of those people were related to the people in our two cemeteries here. So, we've got a lot of information on the people in the Uniontown Cemetery.

LD: What about some of the cemeteries that are on the hills over here on the other side?

RD: We found that there were some graves over there on that property, Foster and Widdle, I believe it was. I don't remember them. In fact my son was the one that put us...when we were living at the resort and he was just a little guy, he and a buddy of his had been prowling around. And Ray talked to Mel a lot. And Mel told him that there were some graves there at that corner of Fain Road and Mt. Murphy Road. But that he had taken the tombstones up on the hill and put them under some trees because people kept bothering with them and he didn't want them destroyed. So, I went up there and took a picture of them, but they didn't come out very good. There was too much leaves and too much shrubs and trees around. But you can kind of tell what they are. I have the pictures. Oh, one thing I needed to tell you, I had Armond Winje here, and he told me, in fact he took me down there and showed me the area, that the Monroes, Mrs Sarah Monroe, had a cemetery there on her property. It was some people who came here and part of them died and she had them buried on their property because they didn't have any people.

LD: So are they still there and been located?

RD: I suppose so. Now this is what Armond told me. He said he went down there and did a lot of tractor work for them on the property. And she told him, "Well, you be careful when you go over there." or Perly told him, "You be careful when you go over there, because that's my mom's cemetery."

LD: The cemetery committee has pretty much documented everyone that is in the cemetery?

RD: Mmm-hmmm and we put markers that my husband made and we ordered the brass plaques for on every one that we knew where they were buried.

LD: And that's pretty much all that you do in working on the geneology and the history, I mean the cemetery part of the volunteering. Al of course works on other stuff. Can you think of anything else that might be beneficial to us to record?

RD: Let's see. Perly Monroe used to sit over there on that bench out from the gun shop. And everytime he'd come by, you had to stop and talk to him, so I did get to meet Perly. I want to make everyone aware that John Hassler was the one that did the research and got people started to building the sawmill.

LD: He's the guy that built the replica...

RD: And his family, the Hasslers were old time residents of Placerville. And he was part of the historical society. He's dead now.

LD: So you knew Perly. And you got to talk with him.

RD: Yeah, I got to talk with him. It wasn't, you know, just passing the time of day, or he'd say something funny.

LD: So, he was quite elderly.

RD: Yeah, he was. I think he died in 1963 and I came here in 1961. At one time we were going to put a sign on his property down there about the resort, to advertise the resort. And he told us it was all right and he wanted to know if it was all right for the people from the NAACP to camp at our campground. And we said sure, no problem. And shortly after that, there were some black people came and asked about camping there, and

I was showing them the campground and telling them to pick out the spot they wanted and reserve and what have you. And they left and they never came back, so I think they were testing us.

But, John Hassler should get some credit for that sawmill.

LD: Does he still have family in the area?

RD: He has two daughters here. I think one of them is married to a Winje.

LD: Now was the Thomas house still occupied at that time?

RD: Seems to me that I was. I know when I was up there, the Vernon house was still there and that's the one the state was going to take and have as a house for the people, the public to go through. But, it burned. And I think, Mr. Vernon, they took him to Sacramento, or someplace. Anyway, he later died. Then they decided to use the Thomas house. So, I can't remember if anybody was living there or not, I wasn't up that way that much at that time. Across the street there, is the Bed and Breakfast now. It originally a Dr. Oleator. I think he was a dental surgeon in Sacramento. And his family only used it as a vacation place. But his family had grown up and they hadn't used it for a number of years, and George Mathos and his wife and daughter bought it, the artist, and they lived there. And at first George couldn't walk very good, he'd had some kind of bone problem, or something. He told me that the doctors said he would never walk again, but he said he was determined to. And one time I saw him at the Post Office and he said, "Reva, I walked all the way from home to the Post office." He was so proud of himself.

LD: Do you get involved also in the El Dorado County Historical Society?

RD: I was not a member of it, no. I had friends who were members of it, but I was not a member of it. But, I did a lot of research at the museum, there. They have so much information.

LD: I can't think of anything else, can you?

RD: No, we got John Hassler, he got people to donate materials, labor, equipment or what have you, and the state said they would match whatever we raised here. And they had underground equipment, backhoe. So somebody here a while back said they thought the state built that, it was the Community AND the State, and I think John Hassler should get credit for that.

LD: In the docent training, I think they mention John when they were talking about this community.

RD: Yeah, he was a quite a historian. He used to write articles for the paper about different people and the events here.

For the [Mountain] Democrat?

RD: Umm-hmm. We have copies of a lot of them. OK!

LD: OK!

RD: I hope I've given you something that...

LD: OK, this has just been wonderful, I know we both are sitting here thinking of things, later on we'll think of things that we should have talked about.

RD: Well, if you think of things something that you think I would know or could explain better, or something I could explain better, or something...

LD: We can always redo this...